

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Unfortunately, this now famous statement by philosopher George Santayana has been proven true when one looks back at the history of the U.S. Army's acquisition and logistics efforts. I've seen and lived through several instances of our ignorance of the importance of logistics and have made it my mission to stop us from repeating the errors of our past. However, we cannot do that from the operational side alone. We need the acquisition community to be decisively engaged in our efforts to improve system supportability and sustainability.

In the last four or five wars that our country has fought, we furnished hardware and warfighting capabilities in sufficient quantities but failed to build into our systems the proper supportability characteristics to ensure success. We were lucky to have time to develop a logistics infrastructure, acquire critical repair parts and supplies, build stockpiles, and organize ourselves for successful sustainment.

Today, we do not have the luxury of time. Improved supportability concepts must be built into our new and redesigned systems. We must minimize the logistics requirements and structures on the battlefield. Reliability is no longer a desired quality; *ultrareliability* is now an essential system quality. Stockpiles are no longer affordable. Old logistics support structures disappear and we are doing more with less every day. Only by diligence and careful attention to past mistakes will we be successful in the future.

In World War II, the Army logistics community planned on 114 divisions. However, when it was determined that we needed a stronger logistics support structure, that number was reduced to 90 support units. Even so, Patton's Third Army ran out of fuel and armor-piercing ammunition. I'm quite sure of that fact because I was there at that time as a company commander in the 47th Tank Battalion. As distressing as those shortages were to us, the critical shortage of coffee was even more emotional!

# THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVED SUPPORTABILITY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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To avoid a 21st century repeat of Patton's Third Army pitfalls, we need to radically reduce our battlefield fuel requirement. We need to rapidly capitalize on new alternate fuel technologies. We absolutely need to improve precision munitions to reduce the battlefield ammunition requirement. Systems must be more reliable so that fewer mechanics and fewer contractors are in our battlespace. Remember that a logistics "tail" is also a great consumer of supplies, and protecting supply lines drains combat power from the forward battle.

Why do I continue to lecture the acquisition community on the criticality and pitfalls of logistics? It's because you dictate the logistician's battlefield. When you trade a supportability improvement for cost, schedule, or performance, you add another logistics burden on a very lean support structure. When you add a warfighting capability but fail to thoroughly consider the life-cycle support concept and costs, you doom the logistician to failure. Will logisticians eventually prevail? Of course. We always do. Historically however, it has taken us much longer than our combat leaders desire.

Logisticians and acquisition program managers need to stay "linked at the hips" throughout a system's development. Both need to keep foremost in their minds the absolutely critical effect of their decisions on the soldiers who man that system and on the dwindling

number of support troops who must keep it running and supplied.

As our acquisition community goes about its superb work each day supporting the world's greatest Army, remember some of the great military disasters or near-disasters of our history that were attributed to logistics planning and capability failures:

- Confederate General Lee's invasion of the North during the Civil War failed because of the inability to move supplies and secure supply lines.
- WWI General of the Armies John J. Pershing had to dismantle five combat divisions and turn them into supply and service units to support his force.
- General Patton's WWII task force, which was sent to liberate POWs of Hammelburg, became prisoners themselves when, out-gunned, they outran their fuel supply, failed to secure supply lines, and failed to plan for enough transport for the POWs.

It's up to us to make sure only the successes of history are repeated. Then logisticians can work on that coffee shortage problem!

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